

### **Crayfish Ban In Effect For Middle Potomac and Susquehanna River Basins**

New temporary emergency regulations pertaining to the catch, possession and use as bait of crayfish became effective on July 17, 2008. These new regulations will become permanent on October 6, 2008. The regulations prohibit a person from catching any species of crayfish, using any live crayfish as bait or possessing any live crayfish while fishing in the [Middle Potomac River](#) and [Susquehanna River Basins](#).

These changes were presented to the public at five Inland Fisheries public meetings in April 2008.

Rusty crayfish is native to portions of the Ohio River in Illinois, Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee. As popular bait for game fishes, this species has been widely introduced outside of its native range. Bait bucket introductions of rusty crayfish have been documented in at least 14 other states and portions of Canada. All of these introductions have had devastating effects on the invaded ecosystems. Rusty crayfish can eliminate native crayfishes and can reduce the quality and quantity of habitat available to other stream species. Rusty crayfish feed heavily on mayflies, stoneflies, and other invertebrates that are important food sources to stream fishes. This species also consumes fish eggs and can destroy aquatic vegetation beds. These habits can impact game fish populations.

In 2006, MDNR in anticipation of future invasive species issues, banned the rusty crayfish, among other invasives, from the state of Maryland. In 2007, the rusty crayfish was discovered in the upper Monocacy River and in the Susquehanna River above Conowingo Dam. Further surveys of these areas determined that the outbreak is contained in these two areas. It is believed to have been unintentionally introduced by anglers as discarded bait dumped into Pennsylvania tributaries to these rivers, and has since spread south across the state line. This invasive species has the potential to cause profound changes to Maryland's streams and rivers. MDNR biologists are concerned that the spread of this species may be hastened by additional bait bucket introductions in Maryland. The new regulation aims to prevent the inadvertent or intentional movement of this species into other Maryland watersheds.